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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 000638

SIPDIS

NSC FOR JENDAYI FRAZER
LONDON FOR GURNEY
PARIS FOR NEARY
CAIRO FOR MAXSTADT

E.O.12958: DECL: 04/3/08
TAGS: PREL MOPS MASS PGOV IV NI
SUBJECT: NIGERIA: ECOWAS EXEC SEC CHAMBAS SAYS REGIONAL
DEPLOYMENT NEEDS MONEY

Classified by Ambassador Howard F. Jeter. Reason 1.5 (B) and (D).

¶1. (C) Summary: During a hurried April 3 dinner at the Ambassador's residence, ECOWAS Executive Secretary Chambas said he was accompanying President Obasanjo to Cote d'Ivoire for the coalition government's Council of State meeting April 4. Obasanjo hopes that his attendance, along with Presidents Kufuor, Wade and Eyadema, would convince the rebel leaders to attend. Chambas said an ECOWAS Ministerial would be held next week in Abidjan to discuss ECOMICI financing which would run out this month. He expected that the Ministerial would task a smaller group to visit donor countries to elicit financial support. Chambas also stated that ECOWAS and Nigeria were seriously considering the use of Nigeria soldiers to provide security for the Ivoirien Government. End Summary.

¶2. (C) At an April 2 dinner with Ambassador Jeter, ECOWAS Executive Secretary Mohammed Chambas said he was leaving Abuja early the next morning to accompany President Obasanjo to Yamoussoukro. Chambas explained that President Obasanjo, Wade, Eyadema and Kufuor decided to go to Cote d'Ivoire to end rebel reluctance to participate in the National Reconciliation Government (NRG). Rebel leaders had boycotted prior meetings; the Heads of State feared the rebel absence, if continued, could fatally undermine the NRG. The regional leaders thought their presence, by reducing the rebel's security concerns, would encourage the rebels to attend the session. When apprised that the presidential quartet would be in Yamoussoukro, MPCI leader Soro promised to attend. Chambas said that Soro and other rebels leaders had great reverence and respect for the elder statesmen in West Africa, and especially Obasanjo. He thought the quartet's effort would help.

¶3. (C) Chambas stated he would remain in Cote d'Ivoire to attend an ECOWAS Ministerial next week. He said Foreign Ministers would meet April 7 or 8 with the priority agenda item being ECOMICI funding. Without additional monies, funds to sustain the deployment would dry up by the end of April. The Ministers needed to discuss how to continue funding the deployment. He claimed that states participating in the force were very concerned about this issue. Not only did they want the deployment to be financed for the Ivoiriens' sake but they were also worried about the effects in their capitals of soldiers returning home unpaid and disgruntled.

¶4. (C) Chambas claimed that the costs for a six month deployment of the current ECOMICI force was 26 million USD. Compounding the financial woes, Chambas said the deployment would last at least until 2003 elections and for a time there after. Ideally, ECOWAS would like to enlarge the force to approximately 3,400 soldiers, given the force's expanded mandate under the Marscoussis Accord, including border patrol, protection of NRG members, cease-fire monitoring and possibly disarmament and demobilization. All in all, ECOWAS has projected an overall budget of 160 million USD for deployment of the enlarged force until ¶2005.

¶5. (C) Chambas thought the Ministers would agree to send a small team (Ghanaian, Nigerian, Senegalese and Ivorian Foreign Ministers) to visit G-8 and other potential donor capitals to seek financial support. A donor's conference has also been mentioned.

¶6. (C) In response to Ambassador Jeter's question about Nigerian participation in Cote d'Ivoire, Chambas replied that the possibility of using Nigerian troops to provide security to the Ivorian government was under serious

consideration. Everyone recognized that Nigeria could not participate formally in ECOMICI due to domestic political considerations. However, having Nigerian troops serve independent of ECOMICI may be more palatable, he offered. If this deployment were accepted, it eventually could pave the way for a slow integration of Nigerian soldiers into the regional deployment "through the back door." At the very least, such a Nigerian presence would free ECOMICI soldiers from this protective duty, allowing them to focus on other aspects of their mandate.

¶7. (C) COMMENT: Although fully cognizant of the challenges ahead, Chambas was somewhat sanguine about chances for slow progress on the political front in Cote d'Ivoire. His greatest concern was the continued funding of the regional deployment. Everyone agrees that more troops are needed. However, unless ECOWAS can find more money relatively quickly, Chambas is worried that the contingents already there might begin to consider folding their tents, and that would be terrible blow to the pursuit of peace in Cote d'Ivoire.

JETER